THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) The prices of commodities are generally determined by market forces and depend on a multiplicity of factors, of which duty of excise or customs is only one. The Government have not made any detailed study of the extent to which the reduction in excise and customs duties offered in the budgets have been passed on to the consumers and to what extent the benefits are concerned by the manufacturers, importers and other players in the field.

(c) There is no legal mechanism to ensure reduction in price to the extent of reduction in duty of excise or customs, where there is no price control and it may not be feasible to enforce the same through legal mechanism.

Quality Control in Blood Banks

1187. SHRI IQBAL SINGH: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of private/Government blood banks functioning at present in the country; and

(b) what steps are being taken by Government to maintain quality control in the blood banks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI): (a) As per the information available, there are 499 private blood banks and 834 Government blood banks functioning at present in the country.

(b) For ensuring safety of donated blood, Drugs & Cosmetics Act/Rules provides for mandatory testing of blood for blood transmissible diseases namely Hepatitis, HIV/AIDS, Syphilis and Malaria. The licensing of blood banks has been brought under dual authority of State and Central Government since 1993. The Drugs Controller (India) is now the Central License Approving Authority. A joint inspection of the blood banks is carried out by Central and State Inspectors before approving the license to blood banks.

News-Items Regarding Industrial Slowdown

1188. SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Industrial slowdown is not due to high interest rates, SBI", which appeared in the Times of India of 31st October, 1996;

(b) if so, the real reasons for the slowdown of industrial production; and

(c) the measures proposed to arrest the slowdown?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) During April-July, 1996, industrial production registered a growth rate of 9.3 per cent compared with 12.3 per cent in April-July, 1995. The slow down of Industrial growth during April-July, 1996 is due to poor performance of electricity and mining which recorded a growth rate of 2.5 per cent and 1.8 per cent respectively. Manufacturing sector which countributes 77.4 per cent to industrial production registered a growth rate 11.7 per cent in April-July, 1996 which is almost the same as 11.4 per cent recorded in April-July, 1995. As per growth rate by use-based classification, capital goods (18.6 per cent), intermediate goods, (11.1 per cent) and consumer goods (9.6 per cent also performed well in April-July, 1996. But, the growth rate of basic goods at 4 per cent in April-July, 1996 was below expectation.

(c) A number of policy measures have been announced by the Reserve Bank of India to ensure that genuine productive activities get adequate credit. These

include substantial scaling down of cash reserve ratio (from 14 per cent of net demand and time liabilities in March 1996 to 11 per cent at present, it is proposed to be reduced further to 10 per cent by January, 1997), raising of export credit limit (from 10 per cent of net bank credit to 12 per cent by end March 1997) as also permitting commercial bank to provide foreign currency denominated loans. Banks have also been advised to reduce their prime lending rates (PLR) for all advances and to announce the maximum spread over PLR.

Proposal to Set up Zonal Benches of Supreme Court

1189. SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL:
SHRI SHIV CHARAN SINGH:

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether some eminent legal luminaries have opined that Zonal Benches of the Supreme Court be set up; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) and (b) Representations/suggestions have been received form time to time from different sections of society for establishing benches of Supreme Court in various parts of the Country. According to Articles 130 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court shall sit in Delhi or in such other place or places, as the Chief Justice of India may, with the approval of the President, from time to time, appoint. No proposal has been received from the Chief Justice of India in this regard. No action is contemplated by the Central Government till such a proposal is received.

Tourist Potential of Excavated remains in Gujarat

1190. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that excavated remains in Lothal, sun temple at Modhera and Rani Ka Vav at Patan in the State of Gujarat have the tourism potential but are facing the neglect of Central and State Governments;

(b) if so, the details thereof and reasons for the neglect of these places of tourism importance;

(c) whether Government have taken any steps to properly develop these places by providing necessary infrastructure at these places to attract more tourists there; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA): (a) to (d) The Development of Tourism is primarily the responsibility of the State Government however, the Department of Tourism provides central financial assistance to the State/Union Territory Govts. for specific projects based on their merits, *inter-se* priority and availability of funds.

The Department of Tourism in consultation with the State Govt. officials has identified "Refurbishment of Sun Temple at Modhera and Refurbishment of step wells at Modhera" for central financial assistance during 1996-97.

Air Safety Committee headed by Air Marshal J.K. Seth

1191. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have set up another Air Safety Committee headed by Air Marshal J.K. Seth recently as